

Definition of Terms

5-year trailing average: In some instances, five years of data are combined and the average across the five years presented. This is done to improve the stability of the estimates, which would otherwise fluctuate due to small numbers of occurrences. The five years “trail” or precede the year presented. For example, the 5-year trailing average for 2004 is calculated using data from the years 2000-2004.

E-codes: E-codes or “external cause of injury” codes are diagnostic categories, using the 9th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9). E-codes differ from nature of injury codes (N-codes) in providing data on the cause, rather than type, of injury. For example, a traumatic head injury, coded with an N-code, could result from, say, a car accident or gunshot wound, both coded with E-codes. Additionally, E-codes distinguish self-inflicted injuries, essential information for suicide surveillance.

Age-adjusted rate: Age-adjusted rates are calculated by multiplying age-specific rates by a standard population weight, which equals the proportion of the U.S. population in year 2000 that was in that age category, and summing the results. Age-adjusting enables comparisons across time and among different populations by eliminating differences in the age distribution. Age-adjusted rates represent those we would have expected if our population had the age distributions of the standard population, here the U.S. 2000 standard population. Maine’s age distribution is shifted to older ages when compared to the entire U.S. Further, the average age is increasing with time, and differs geographically across counties in Maine. Suicide rates are higher in Maine’s older population, and, all else being equal, we would expect to observe higher rates in Maine as a result of having an older population. By standardizing the age distributions of the U.S. and Maine, we eliminate the potential for confounding by age.